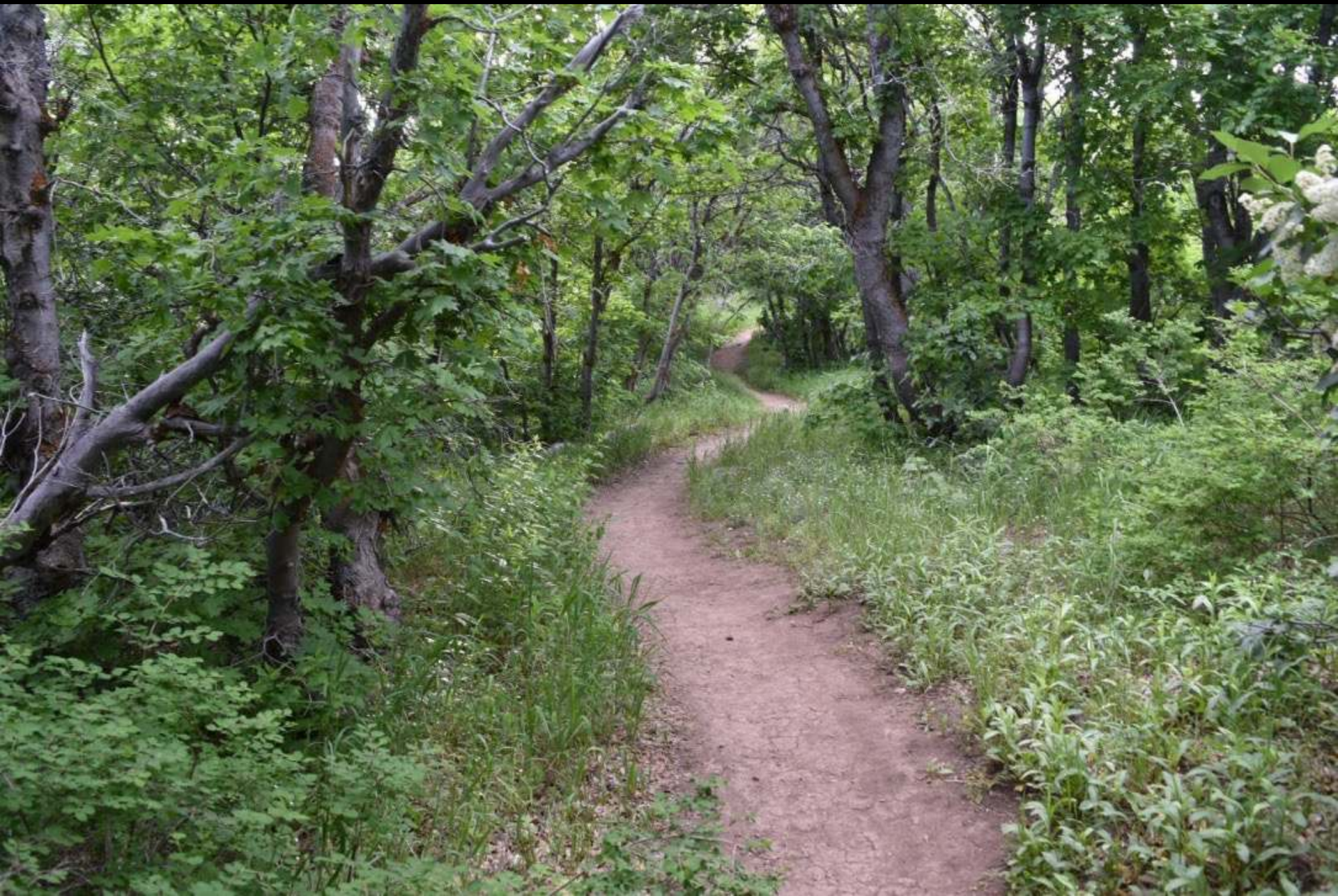


Tailwinds and Headwinds: Stretching Yourself In Your Personal and Academic Life

Troy Cox, Ph.D.
Associate Director of Research and Assessment,
Center for Language Studies
Brigham Young University







**What is
Proficiency?**

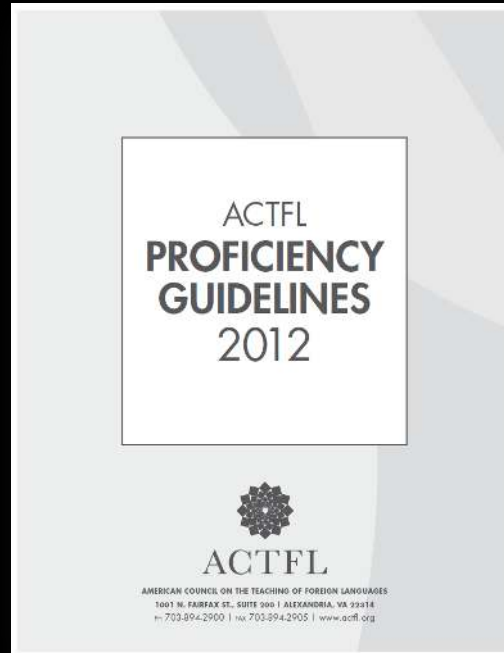
The Birth of the Proficiency Scale



The ILR Scale

Scale	Description
5	Functionally Native Chameleon
4	Advanced Professional Proficiency
3	Professional Proficiency
2	Limited Working Proficiency
1	Elementary Proficiency
0	No Functional ability

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012



www.actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines Describe

- Functional language ability
- The ability to USE language for real world purposes
- Not what a learner knows about language
- What users of a language can and cannot do
- Curriculum independent

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

Guidelines describe what a language user can do (say, write, understand) **consistently at one level** and cannot do **at the next higher level**

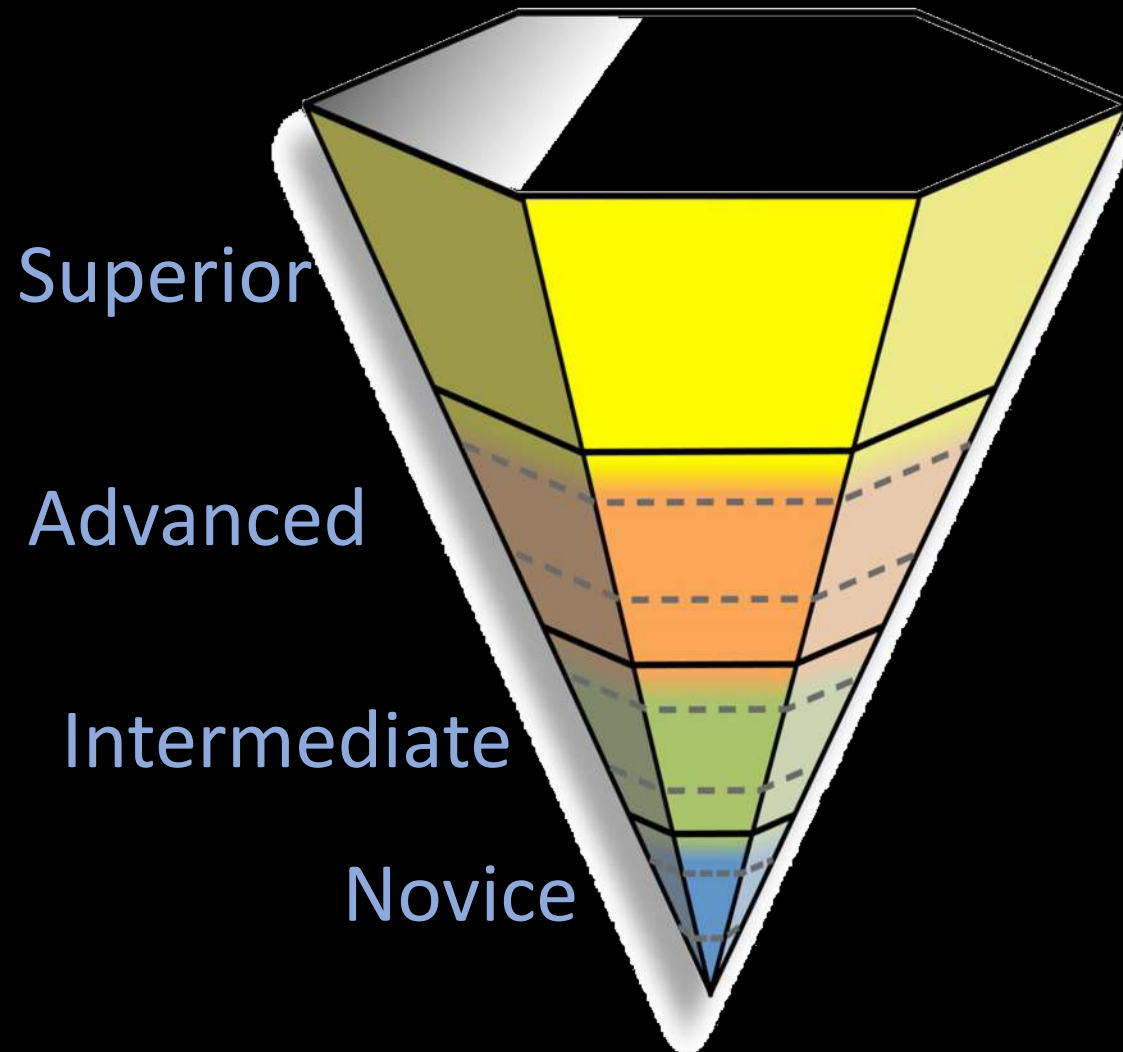
SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IS....

... the ability to use a language to communicate meaningful information in a spontaneous interaction, and in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language.

SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IS....

... the ability to use a language to communicate **meaningful information** in a **spontaneous interaction**, and in a manner **acceptable and appropriate** to native speakers of the language.

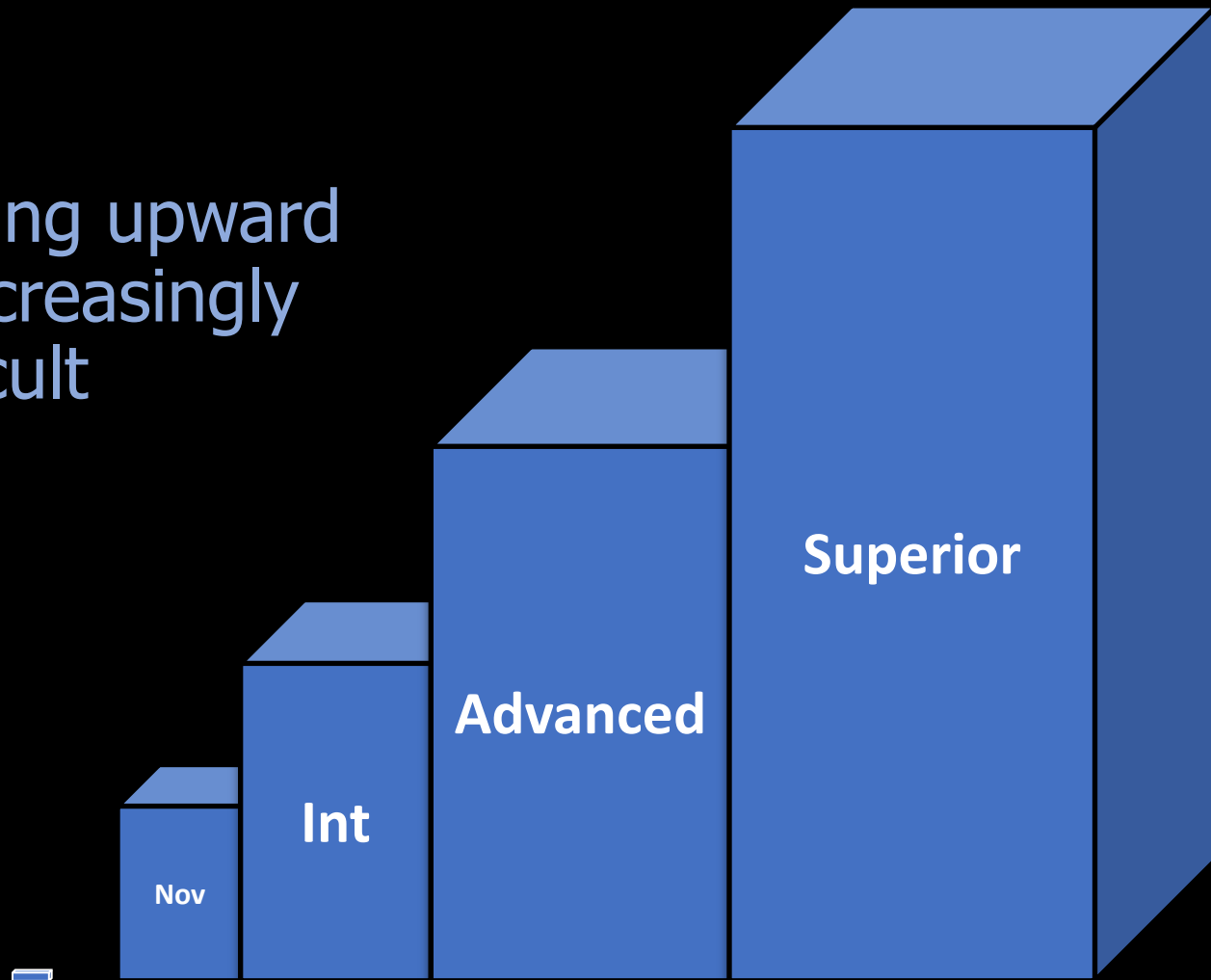
ACTFL SCALE – MAJOR LEVELS



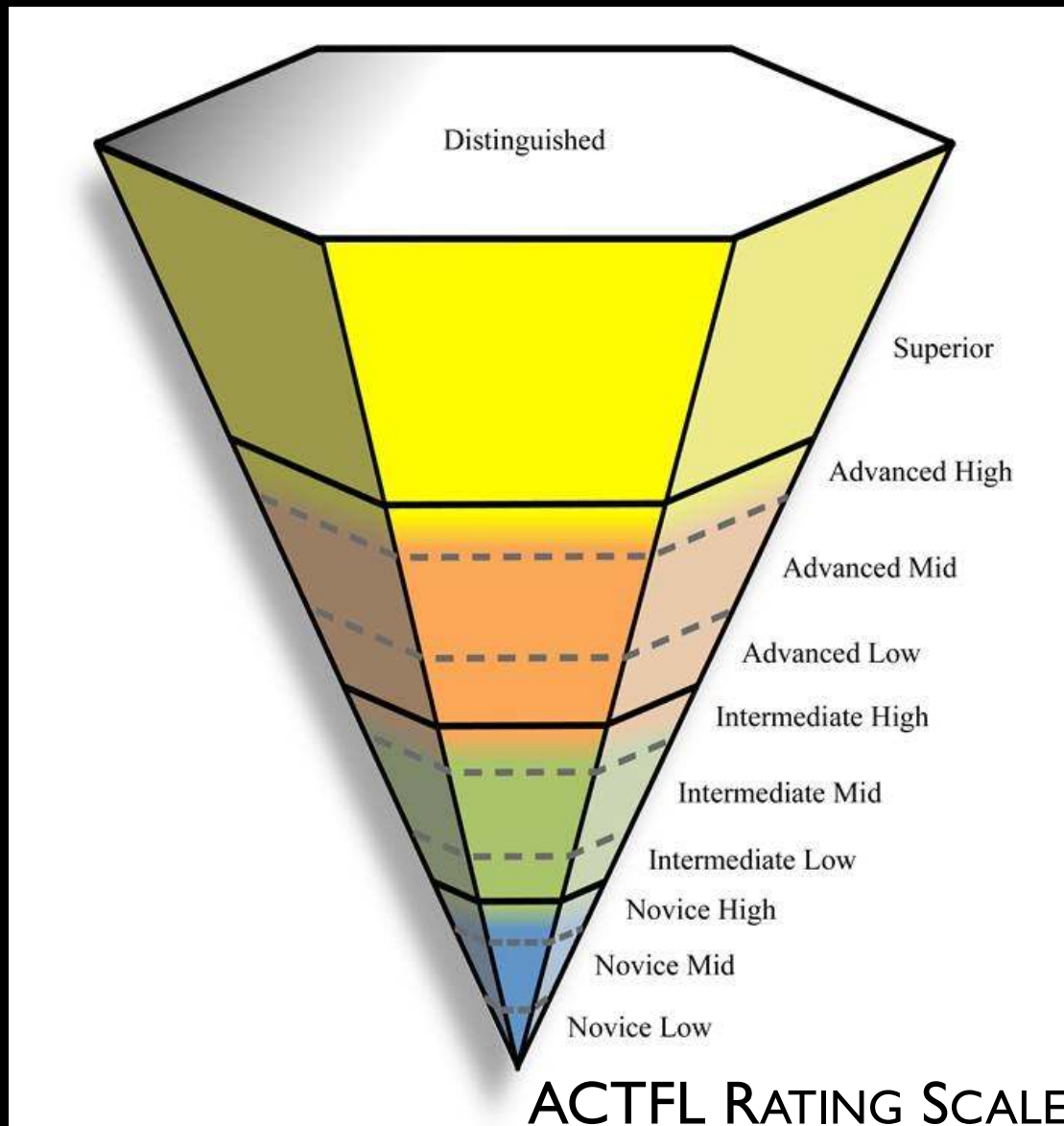
- Four major levels
- Hierarchy of global tasks
- A geometric progression

The ACTFL Scale

Moving upward
is increasingly
difficult



The ACTFL Scale - Sublevels



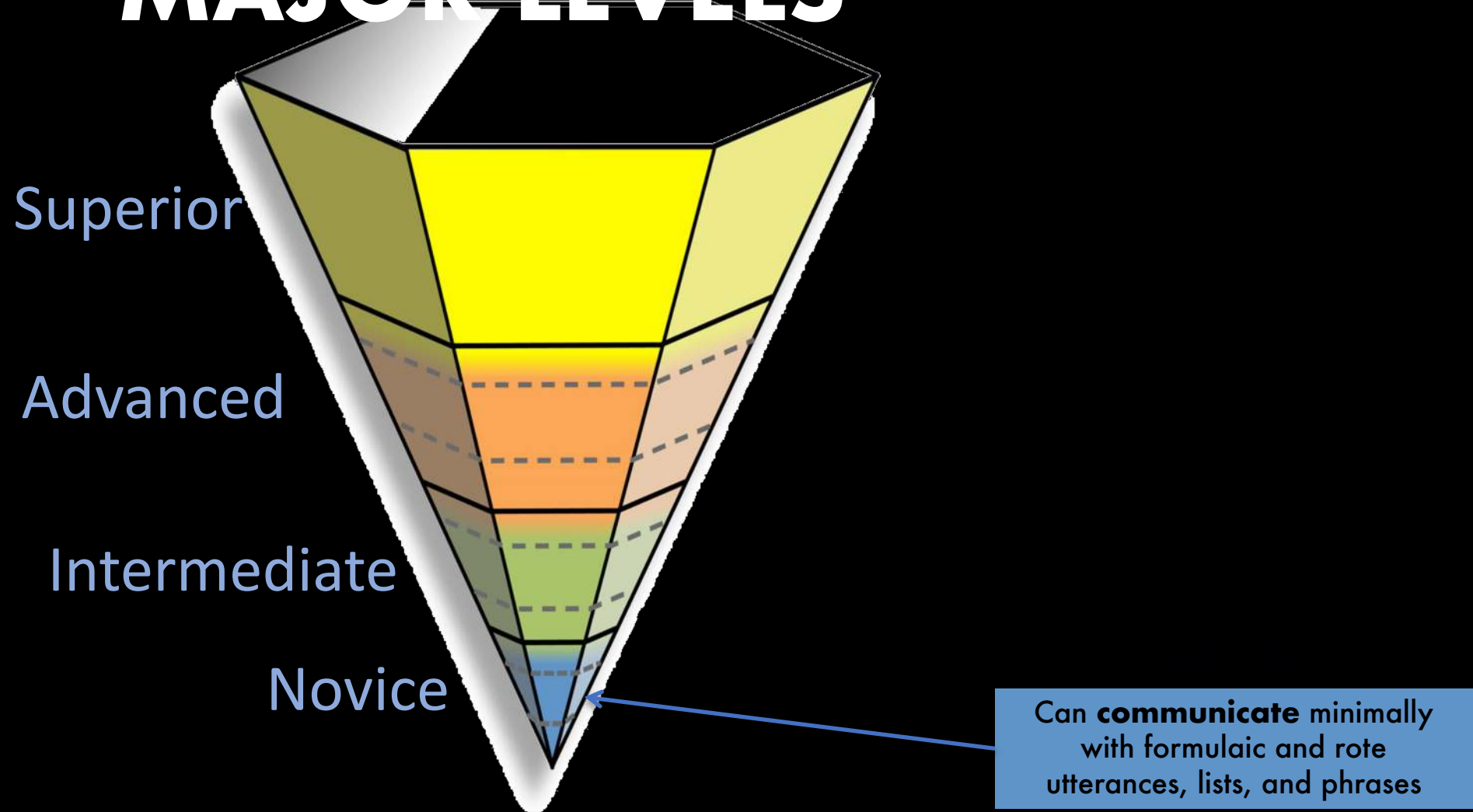
The ACTFL Scale - Sublevels

- High
 - Approaching next higher level
 - Almost all the time
- Mid
 - Strong, solid at level
- Low
 - Minimally sustaining level
 - Barely hanging on

Sublevels

- Do not have unique criteria
- Reflect the quality of performance of the assessment criteria for the major level

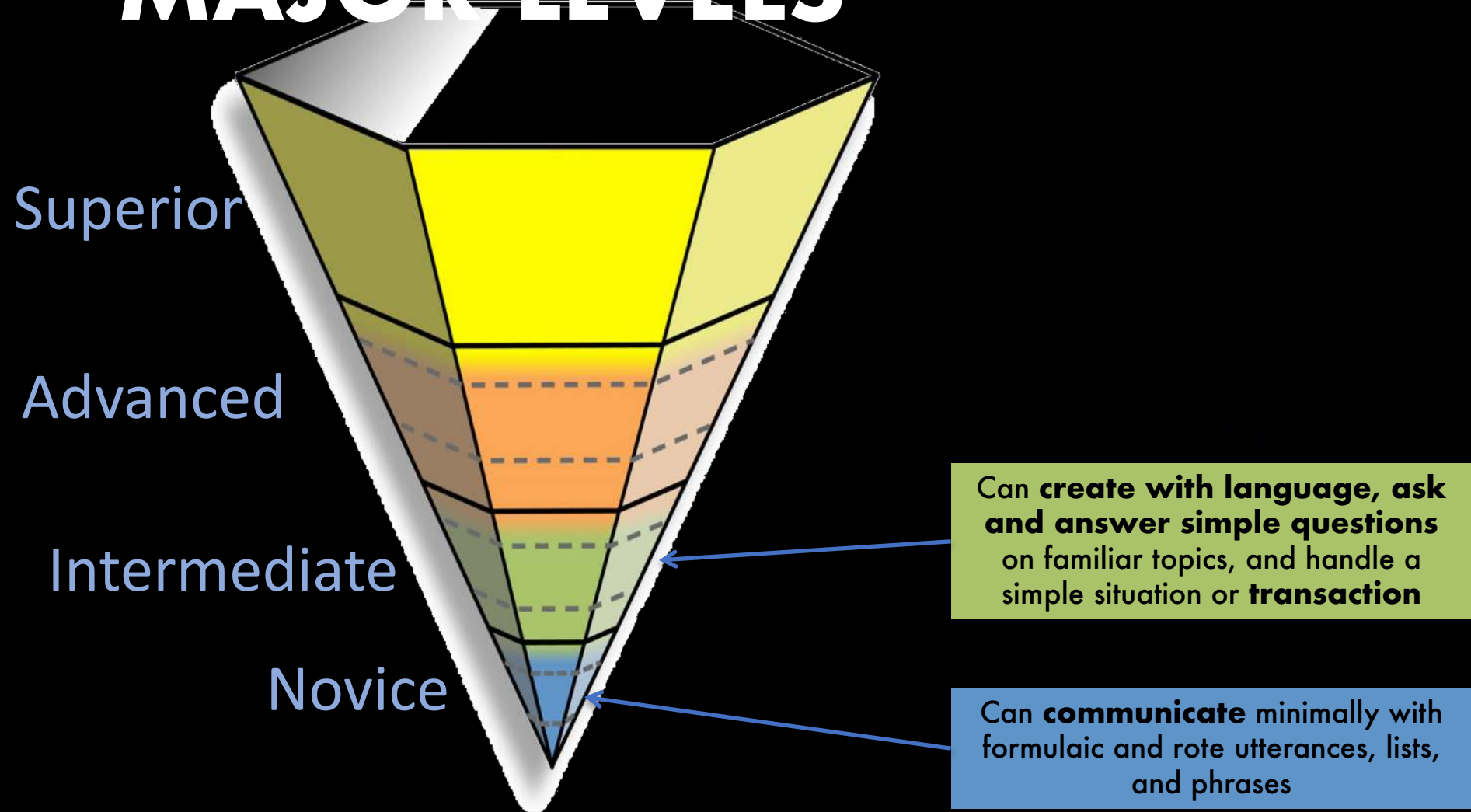
THE ACTFL SCALE – MAJOR LEVELS



Novice—The Parrot

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUIQKKbRZ9g>

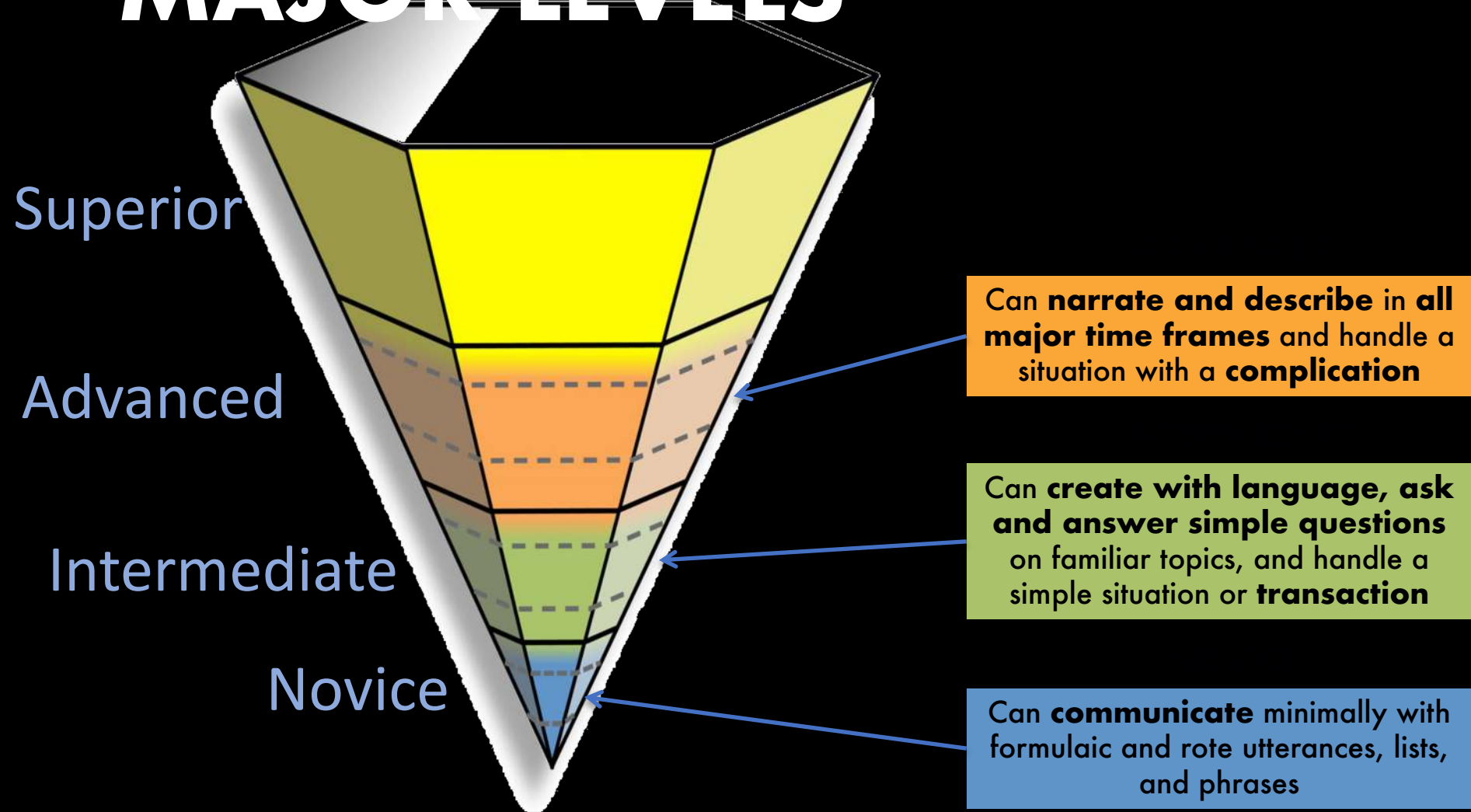
THE ACTFL SCALE – MAJOR LEVELS



Intermediate—The linguistic survivor

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyRp8sikc8w&feature=youtu.be>

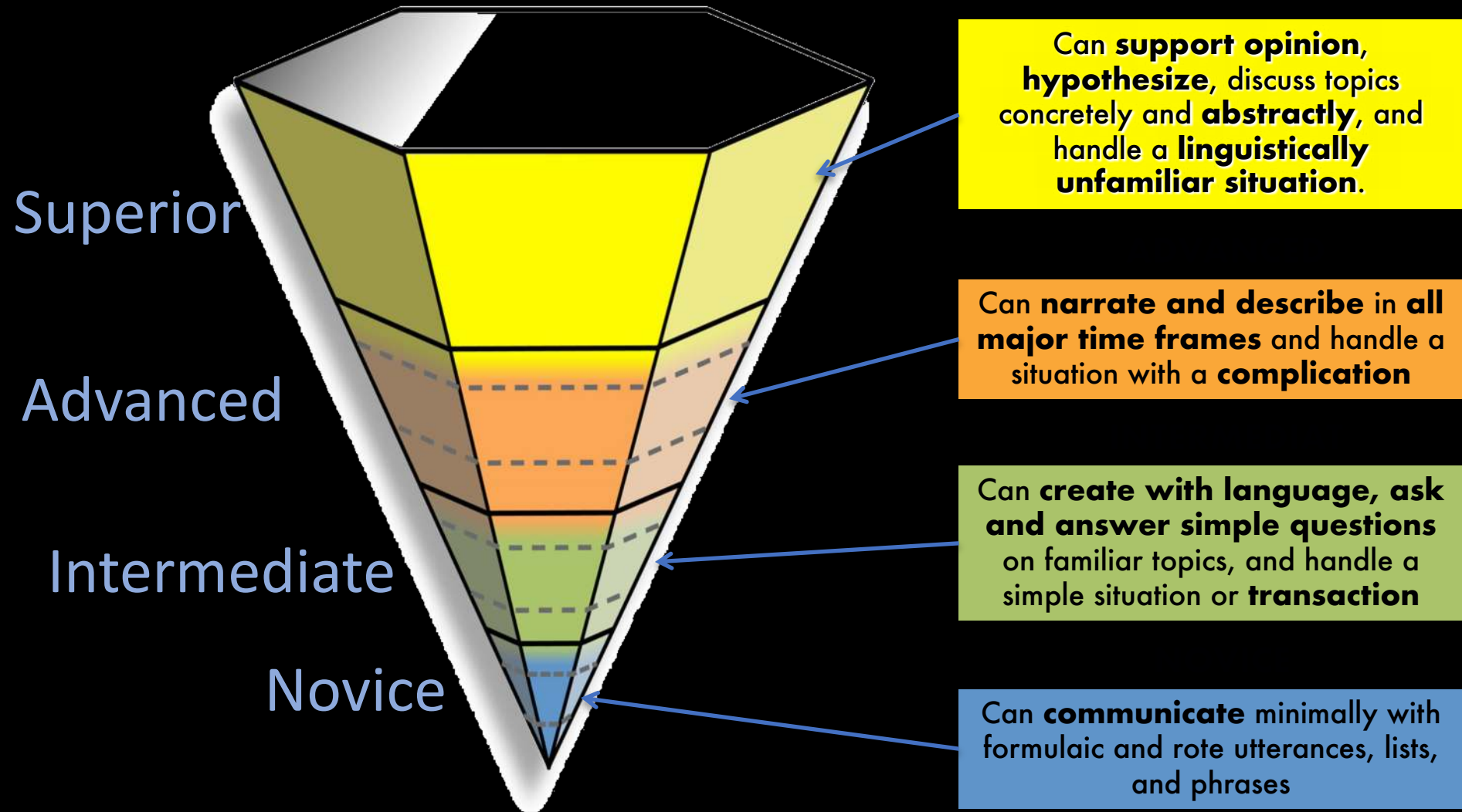
THE ACTFL SCALE – MAJOR LEVELS



Advanced—The Informed Reporter

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx-AihNjgmw>

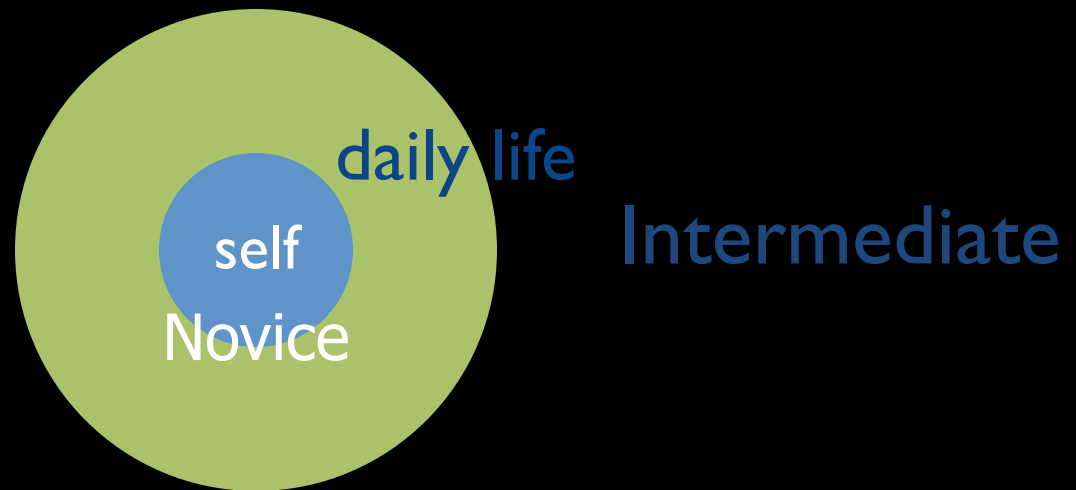
THE ACTFL SCALE – MAJOR LEVELS



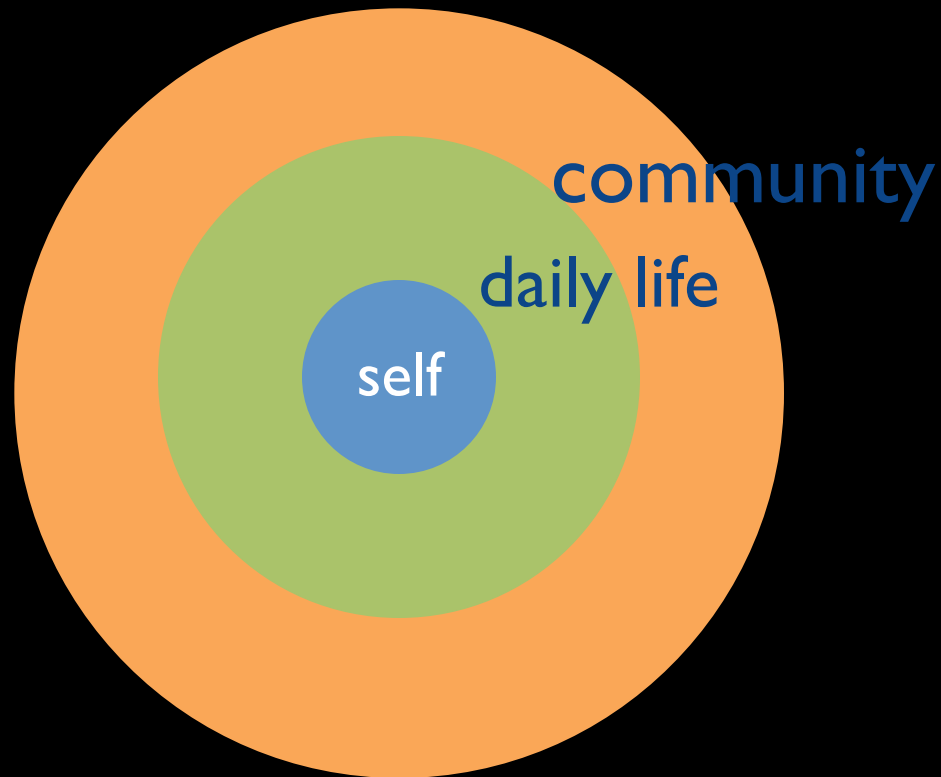
Superior—The Thinker

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzKEejU9_h0

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – CONTEXTS AND CONTENT

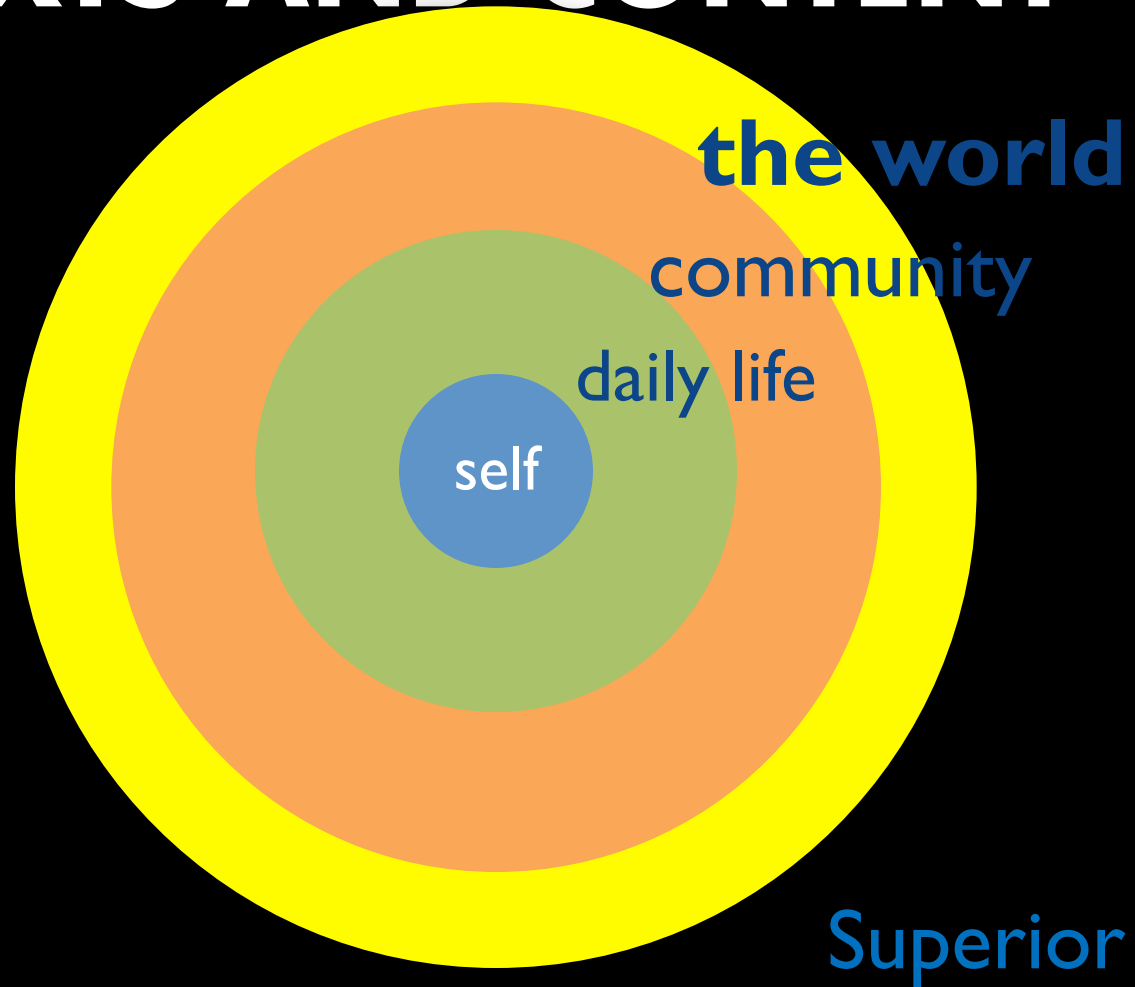


ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – CONTEXTS AND CONTENT



Advanced

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – CONTEXTS AND CONTENT



ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – TEXT TYPE

Extended cogent discourse

Multiple paragraphs

Single paragraphs

Connected sentences

Strings of sentences

Discrete sentences

Words and phrases

Isolated words

Assessment Criteria

Accuracy = Comprehensibility

- By the level of precision needed to convey the message successfully
- By the type of interlocutor who is able to understand the speaker
- On a continuum of structural control
- On a continuum of empathy

Assessment Criteria-Speaking

Proficiency Level	Global Tasks and Functions	Context/ Content	Accuracy/ Comprehensibility	Text Type
Superior	Discuss topics extensively, supports opinions and hypothesize. Deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation.	Most formal and informal settings/ <i>Wide range of general interest topics and some special fields of interest and expertise</i>	No pattern of errors in basic structures. Errors virtually never interfere with communication or distract the native speaker from the message	Extended discourse
Advanced	Narrate and describe in major time frames and deal effectively with unanticipated complication.	Most informal and some formal settings/ <i>Topics of personal and general interest</i>	Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers	Paragraphs
Intermediate	Create with language, initiate, maintain, and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions.	Some informal settings and limited number of transactional situations/ <i>Predictable, familiar topics related to daily activities.</i>	Understood, with some repetition, by speakers accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers.	Discrete sentences
Novice	Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, list and phrases.	Most common informal settings/ <i>Most common aspects of daily life.</i>	May be difficult to understand, even for speaker accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers	Individual words and phrases

Constructing Measures

- How can you measure something you haven't described?
- Can we measure language? Or are we left to describe it only?

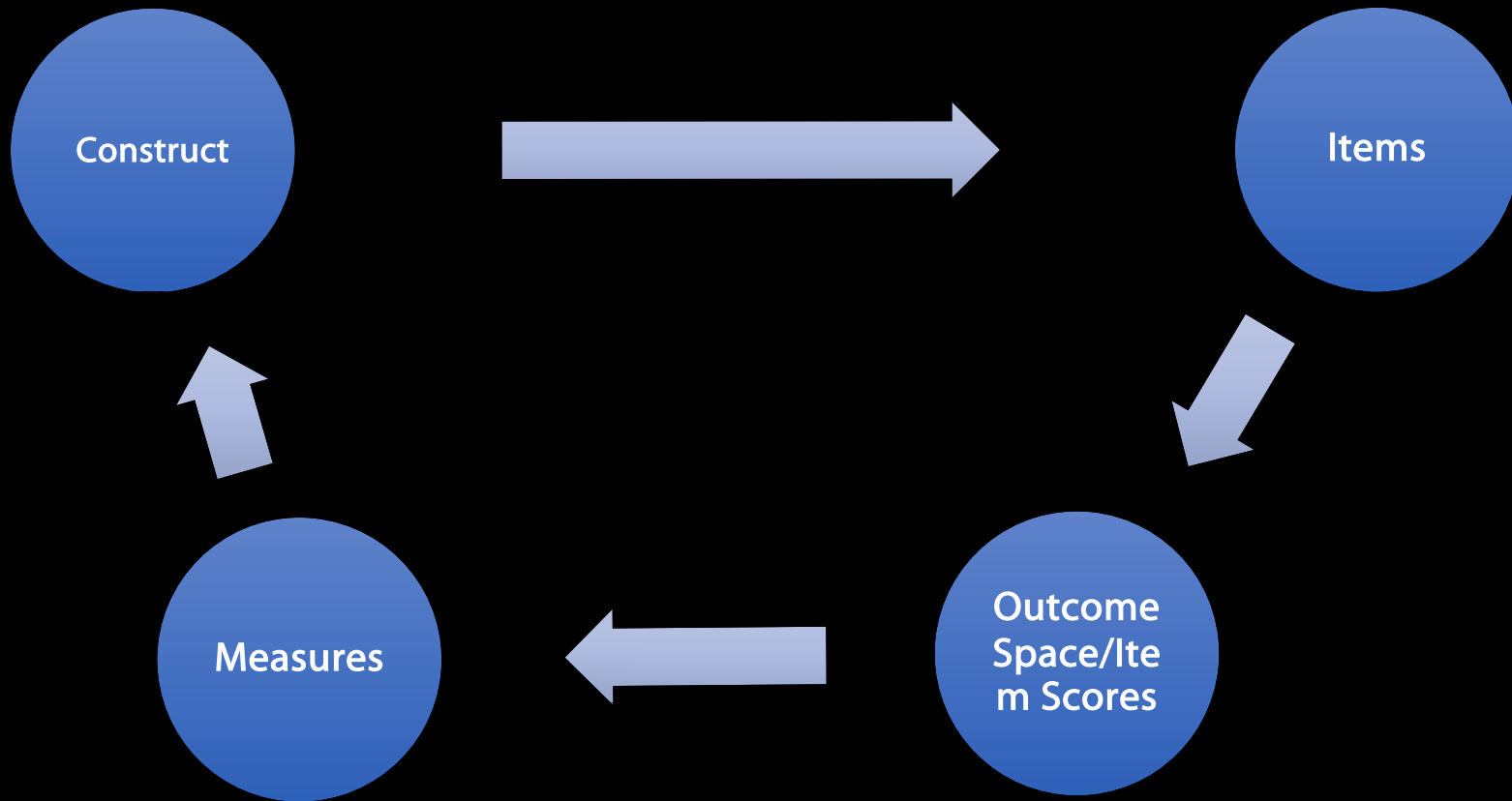
An instrument is always something **secondary**:
There is always a **purpose** for which an
instrument is needed and a **context** in which it is
going to be used.

Emphasis Added (Wilson, 2005, p. 6)

What is your
context?

What is
your
purpose?

Wilson's (2005) Instrument Development Cycle



Construct

- What exactly are you measuring?
- Is it unidimensional?
- If not, does trait growth co-vary?

Construct Map

People

- Do people vary in their ability so that on a continuum, **someone** that has **MORE** ability is likely to be able to do everything than a person with **LESS** ability?

Items/Tasks

- Do tasks vary in their difficulty so that on a continuum, **a task** that is **MORE** difficult is likely to require mastery of everything that is **LESS** difficult?

Not all Traits can be Measured Linearly!

- If you can't define your trait unidimensionally, than you shouldn't claim to measure it.
- Otherwise, what do the numbers you assign mean?

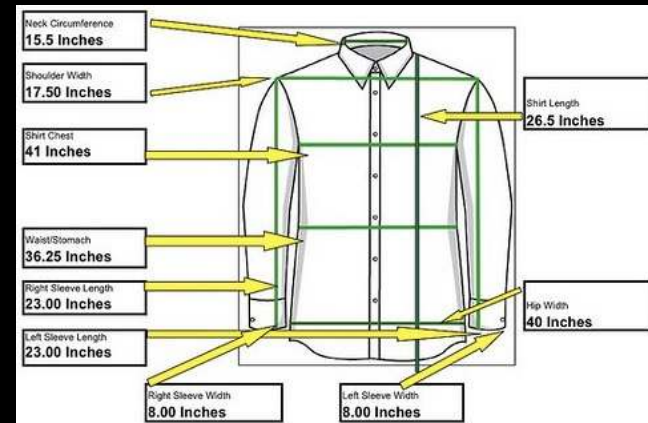
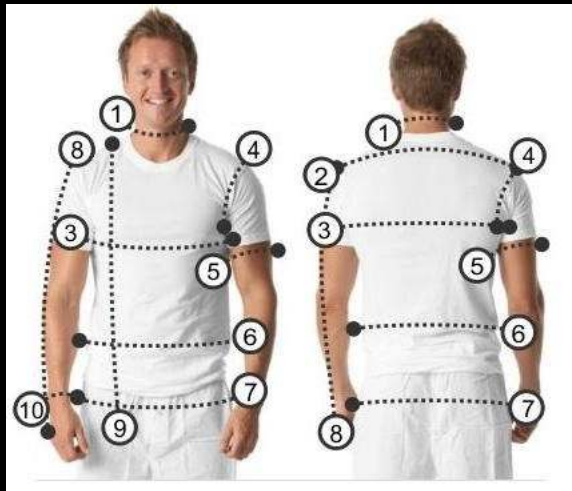


Think of a Physical Analog

- Shirt Example
 - How would you measure a man's shirt if you didn't have a tape measure?
 - What would be important to measure?
 - How many dimensions should we measure?



What will we measure?



Is this a uni-, bi- or multi-dimensional measurement?



Unidimen-
sional

Bidimensional
Off-the-rack Shirt

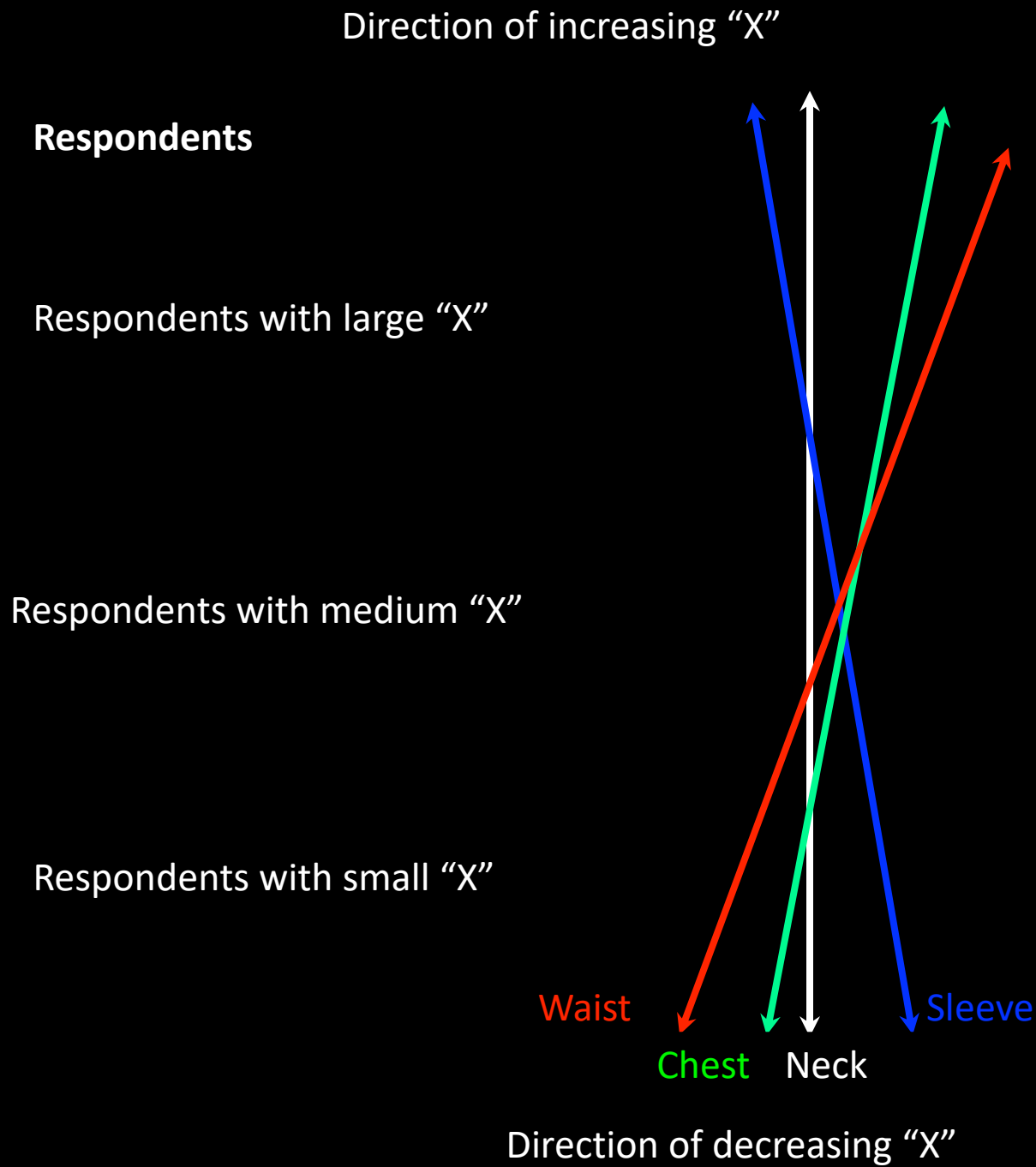
Multidimensional
or the
“Tailored” Shirt

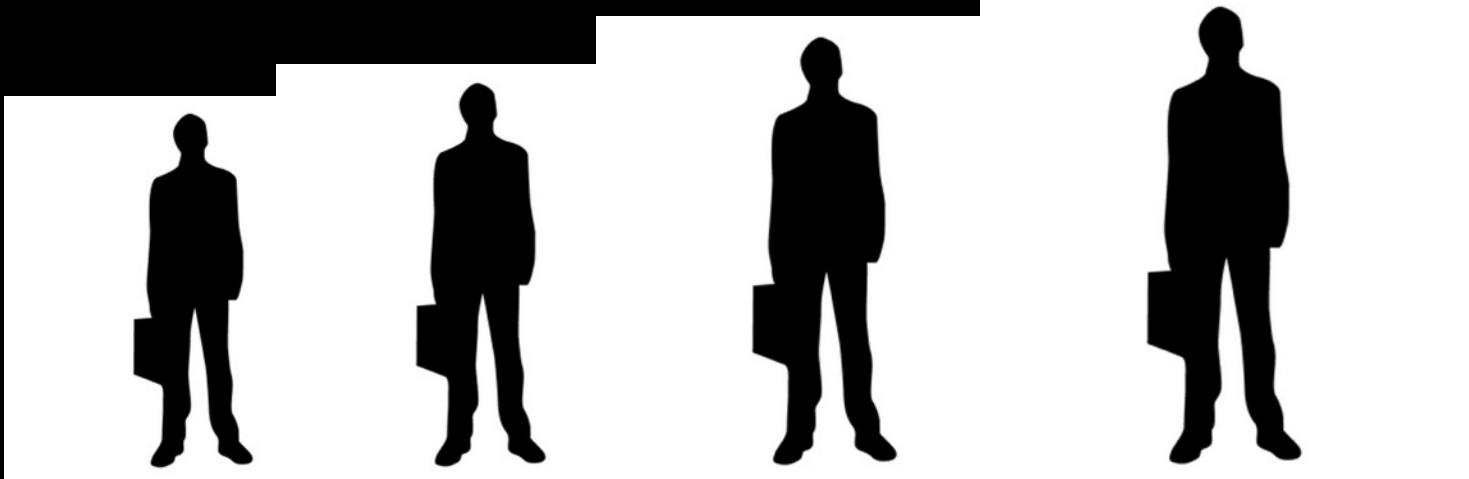
US Sizes
(inches)

S	14-14 ½	32 ½-33	29-31	35-37
M	15-15 ½	33 ½-34	32-34	38-40
L	16-16 ½	34 ½-35	36-38	42-44
XL	17-17 ½	35 ½-36	40-42	46-48

It depends on the shared understanding between
the shirt manufacturer and the customer.

Construct Map





Neck, waist, sleeve and chest *tend* to co-occur.

US Sizes
(inches)

S	14-14 ½	32 ½-33	29-31	35-37
M	15-15 ½	33 ½-34	32-34	38-40
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Compensatory = Large



S	14-14 ½	32 ½-33	29-31	35-37
M	15-15 ½	33 ½-34	32-34	38-40
L	16-16 ½	34 ½-35	36-38	42-44
XL	17-17 ½	35 ½-36	40-42	46-48

Problem with Compensatory Measurement

	Bilbo	Gandalf	Orin
Neck	14 (S)	15 (M)	17 (XL)
Arm Length	32 (S)	33 (M)	36 (XL)
Chest	42 (L)	40 (M)	35 (S)
Total	88	88	88
	S	M	S

Same score, but three very different profiles.

Conjunctive
=
Small or Extra
Large



S	14-14 ½	32 ½-33	29-31	35-37
M	15-15 ½	33 ½-34	32-34	38-40
L	16-16 ½	34 ½-35	36-38	42-44
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Given that consumers will have measurement variation in neck, sleeve, waist and chest size, successful manufactures will ensure that all of their products construct their shirts based on their stated standards.

S	↔	14-14 ½	32 ½-33	29-31	35-37
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Sizes are relative to population



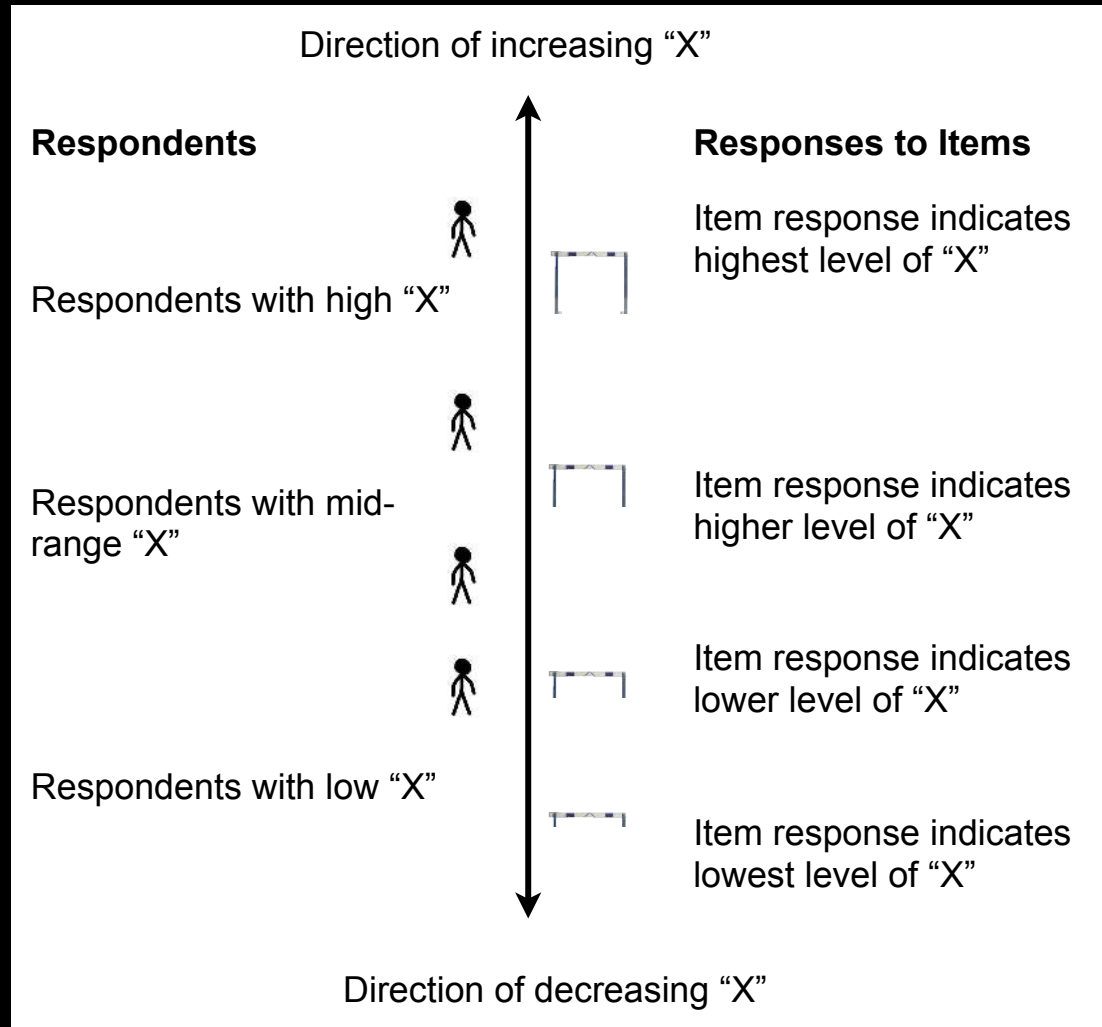
Sizes are relative to population



So, what are we measuring?

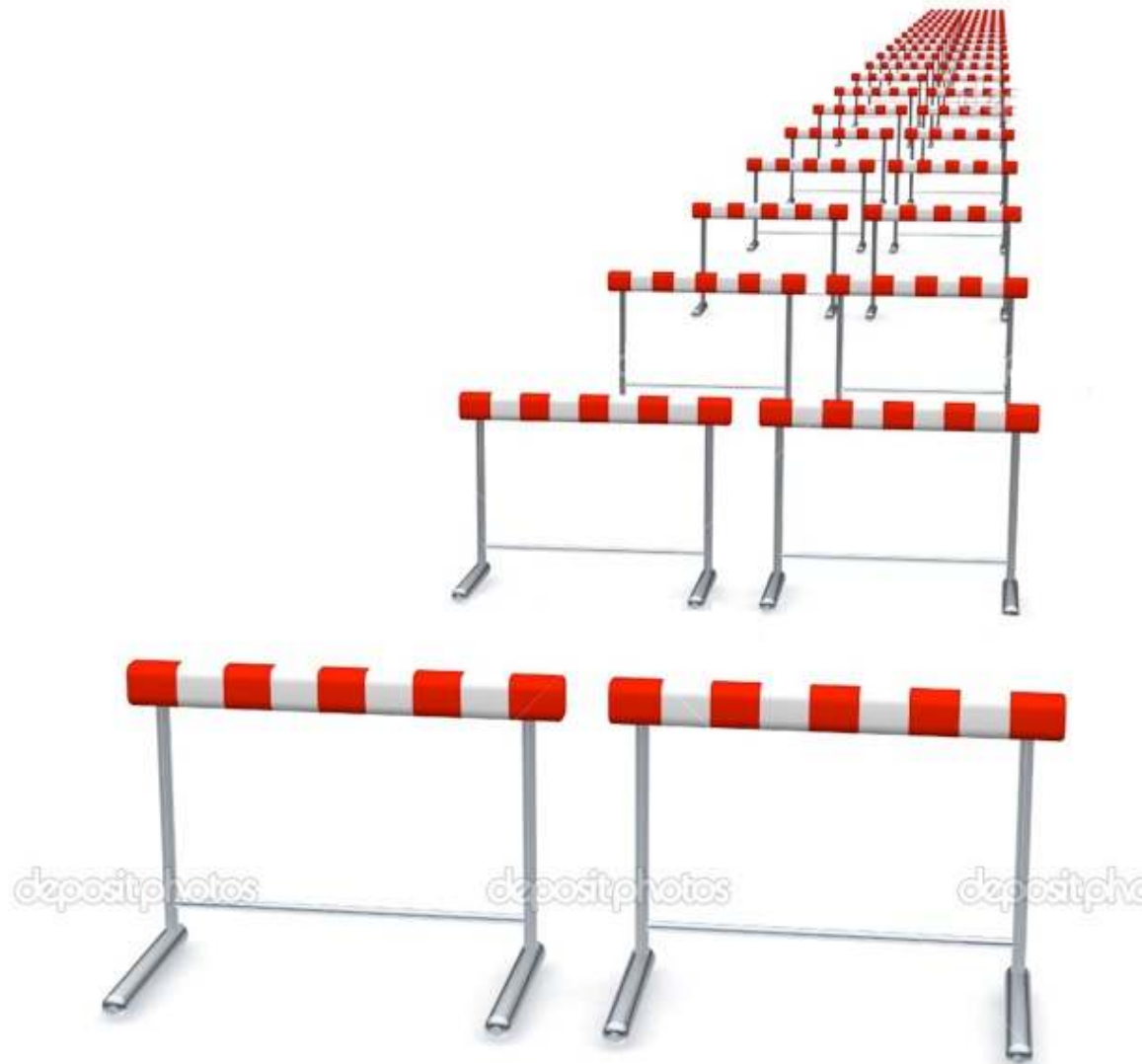
- Construct
 - Make sure you (e.g. the manufacturer) and your end-users (e.g. the customer) have a shared definition of your construct map.
- What's XXXL in one context may simply be L in another.

Construct Map Example—Jumping



Series of repeated, independent measures of the same construct

- Repeated performance increases confidence in reliability
- Independence necessary so we **add** the results into a single score



My Scholarship

- Measuring language proficiency
 - Criterion-referenced against standards
- Floor and ceiling scoring
 - Sustained ability vs. patterns of breakdown
 - Aligning Applied Linguistics CAF to the proficiency guidelines FACTs
- Different skill areas
 - Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing
- Self-Assessment



Tailwinds

Five Studies on Self-Assessment

	Native Language	Second Language	Instrument
Speaking	English	Russian	Self-Retrospective Statements based on Can-Do Subheadings
	English	Spanish	Can-Do Statements with Video Exemplars
Speaking & Writing	Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, French & Others	English	Survey questions based on the Can-Do Statements
Reading	English	Russian	Confidence slider after each question. Passages in Russian with questions in both English and Russian
	Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, & Others	English	Confidence slider after each question. Passages and questions in English

There was a moderate relationship between self-assessment and tested ability.

Consistently over-assessed their abilities

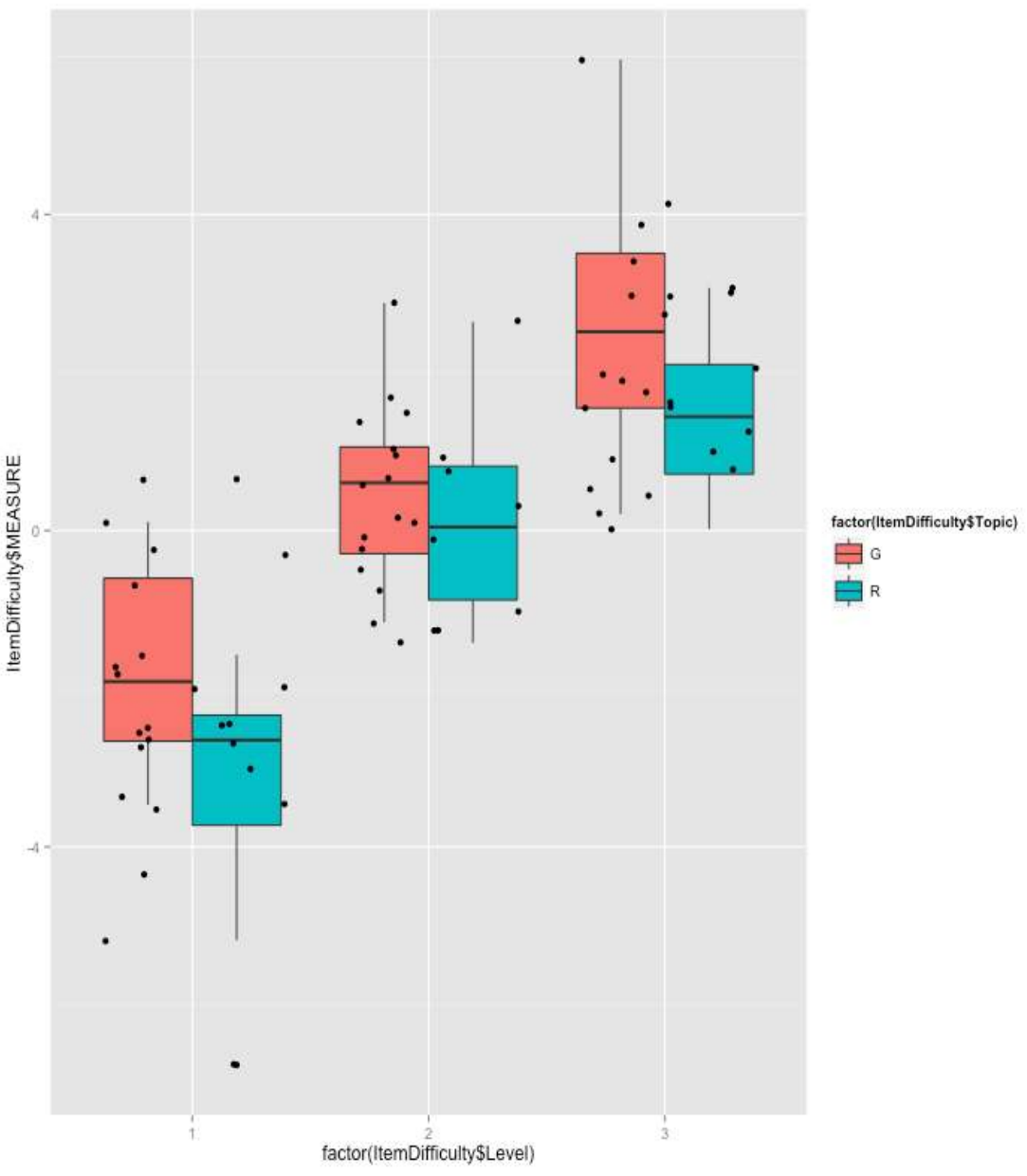
Why? Tailwinds perhaps?

- “Oh, you speak so well.”
- We fail to recognize our blessings.

Davidai, S., & Gilovich, T. (2016). The headwinds/tailwinds asymmetry: An availability bias in assessments of barriers and blessings. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 111(6), 835.

Performance (Green) vs. Proficiency (red)

Item difficulties of Russian Elicited Imitation Test



What are the effects of tailwinds?

- Our performance is better than our true ability
- We can over-estimate our true ability
- We fail to recognize the kindness of strangers
- We confuse performance and proficiency
- We become complacent and “fossilize” in our current state
- Staying at the “floor” will never result in growth



Headwinds



What are the effects of headwinds?

- Our performance is worse than our true ability
- We can under-estimate our true ability
- We might feel the universe is against us
- We confuse performance and proficiency
- We might quit
- The opposition “can” result in growth with deliberate practice
- You can create a headwind by exceeding the speed of a tailwind

Stretching Ourselves



Awkward and ugly are
part of the process

My Discipleship

- And Jesus **increased in wisdom and stature**, and in favour with God and man.
Luke 2:52

- Four areas
 - Intellectual/mental
 - Physical
 - Spiritual
 - Social/emotional

- Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
Matthew 5:48

- Perfect at the time of KJV meant “complete” and “whole.”
Verb aspect *perfect*

Final Thoughts

- Conjoint growth among spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social attributes is my goal (similar to language FACTs)
- The four attributes build upon each other.
- Failure when attempting higher levels is inevitable.
- Tailwinds and headwinds are part of the plan-BE
THOU HUMBLE
- Riding with friends can help you identify the tailwinds and can mitigate the roughness of the headwinds